

ILTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF ILTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH MARCH 2026 AT MERRYFIELD HALL, ILTON (6.30 p.m. to 7.50 p.m.)

PRESENT:

Cllr J Bennett (Chair)
Cllr. A Pidgeon
Cllr. J Easterbrook
Cllr. I Sherwood
Cllr. N Matravers
Cllr. S Ripley
Mrs S Morley (locum clerk)
Mr M Norton
35 members of the public

2026/263 Apologies for Absence

Cllr A Gordon sent his apologies.

2026/264 Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

Cllr Matravers declared an interest in agenda item 11 (Recreation Field).

2026/265 Approval of Minutes

Amendment to minute 2026/248.5. Amount should read £1,690.00.

Subject to the above amendment councillors **RESOLVED TO APPROVE** the minutes of the full council meeting held on 24th February 2026 and the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 16th March 2026.

Proposed Cllr Matravers
Seconded Cllr Sherwood
Cllr Ripley abstained because she was absent from the meetings.

2026/266 Public Session

At the start of the public session Cllr Bennett noted that the public session would last the usual 30 minutes and it might not be possible for everyone present who wishes to speak to be able to do so.

226.1 Dog Park - item is 11(b) on the agenda.

226.2 Highways - concern about the condition particularly of Frost Lane and the number of potholes. Cllr Bennett said a meeting has been arranged with Highways and she will bring this to their attention.

226.3 Church clean up - a request was made from the Church for help with their big clean on Saturday morning from 10 a.m. to 12 a.m. and also for help in the garden.

226.4 Cost of removing the bunds in the car park - the resident had seen a figure of £70,000 for removing the bunds and renovating the car park. Cllr Bennett explained that this is wildly inaccurate. To date there is no quote for renovating the car park, only for removing the bunds, and the quotes are nowhere near this figure (agenda item 11(a)).

The resident asked why the bunds need to be removed and why the car park needs to be resurfaced.

Cllr Bennett explained that the entrance is in a very bad state with many potholes. The car park is well used by visitors to the Recreation Field, by visitors to the Cemetery, by School parents and by residents of Copse Lane. Removing the bunds will make repairs to the car park easier.

Another resident noted that the bunds were created from the soil from building the MUGA and the path because it was cheaper to create bunds than to take the soil away.

226.5 Formal objection to proposed work in the car park - a resident made the following formal objections:

(i) the 2017 lease of the Recreation Field shows the car park land as two separate areas. The first is the Cemetery Car Park which does not form part of the Recreation Field. Funds held for the Recreation Field can only be used for the maintenance of the Recreation Field. It follows therefore that the Parish Council cannot use these funds for the maintenance of the Cemetery Car Park.

(ii) Complaints were made recently to the cutting of the grass on the bunds and the removal of wildlife habitat. The Parish Council has a duty to obtain a wildlife survey regarding the bunds and if it fails to do so it will be acting illegally if it removes the bunds.

Cllr Bennett will reply to both points in writing.

226.6 Outstanding Freedom of Information Request - the same resident queried the outstanding FOI request which has not been met. Cllr Bennett explained that the Parish Council has been without a clerk, but as soon as one is appointed the matter will be dealt with.

226.7 Traffic and parking for recent funeral - concern was expressed about the congestion caused by the number of cars at a recent funeral. Had the overspill car been open people could have parked there. Cllr Bennett explained that if there had there been a request the overspill car park could have been opened.

Much discussion followed concerning the overspill car park including whether Recreation Field funds could be used for the overspill car park.

2026/227 Parish Council Surgery

Cllr Bennett noted that the Parish Council had set up a surgery for an hour before meetings so that residents could come and discuss issues in more detail rather than the 3 minutes during the Public Session of meetings. So far these had not proved a success because people were not coming. Some residents said they were not aware of the surgery sessions. They had been advertised on Facebook and not everyone 'does' Facebook. Cllr Bennett said they would be included in Messenger. Surgery sessions will be run for a bit longer to see if there is more take up by residents.

2026/228 Somerset Councillor Report

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene is ill at the moment so there is no Councillor Report.

2026/229 Finance

See attached

2026/230 Councillor Vacancy

230.1 Resignation

Cllr William Vance has resigned.

230.2 Vacancies

There are now two vacancies on the Parish Council. Residents have requested an election and the process is being run by Somerset Council. Nominations started yesterday and will finish next Monday. Nomination forms can be obtained from Somerset Council and must be returned in person.

If only one or two people are nominated, they will automatically fill the two vacancies available and there will not be an election.

If more than two people are nominated there will be an election in Merryfield Hall on Tuesday 28th April 2026.

The cost so far, for the nomination forms etc, is just over £2,000. If there is full election the cost is likely to be between £4,000 to £5,000.

2026/231 Staffing Committee

There were 89 applicants for the position of Clerk. 7 people were interviewed. The full discussion of this agenda item will be held confidentially at the end of the meeting.

2026/232 Risk Management

The Parish Council has contacted their insurers and will work with them to manage risks. There are six areas of land which the Parish Council has responsibility for and a risk assessment will be produced for each area in consultation with the insurers.

2026/233 Recreation Field

233.1 Car Park removal of bunds

Cllr Bennett noted that ownership of the car park land at the Recreation Field was retained by the Warren Trust when the 2017 lease was drawn up. The Parish Council can use the car park and has responsibility to maintain it. Cllr Bennett met with Guy Coleman of the Warren Trust regarding the removal of the bunds in the car park and the erection of posts. The Warren Trust have given their approval to the works in writing.

Cllr Bennett noted the request regarding the wildlife survey but suggested that the work is formally approved this evening subject to further investigation of the wildlife issue.

A question was asked if the Parish Council had considered grant funding for the car park. Cllr Pidgeon noted that a number of potential funders had been approached but the car park did not qualify because it is not part of a larger project. All due diligence has been done and the Parish Council are of the opinion that it will be in the best interests of the people using the car park if the bunds are removed.

Accordingly, 3 quotes have been received:

Quote A - £12,000.00

Quote B - £10,000.00

Quote C - £3,500.00

All three have waste removal licences. Contractor A has good reviews on line: contractor C has been used by the Parish Council before and the workmanship is good. Contractors A and C have required insurance; we would need to check regarding contractor B.

**Cllr Pidgeon proposed acceptance of Quote C
Cllrs Bennett and Sherwood voted to accept the proposal.
Cllrs Ripley and Easterbrook abstained.
Cllr Matravers declared an interest.**

Accordingly, the resolution to accept Quote C was carried subject to more investigation into the wildlife query which was raised.

233.2 Proposal for an enclosed off-lead dog area

A resident has produced a proposal for an enclosed off-lead dog area in a part of the Recreation Field. There is one in Bridgwater which is well run and she suggested a visit by Councillors. She will also obtain more information about how it is run.

The proposal is for an area at the far end of the Field away from the MUGA and Football Pitch and inside the circular path. The size would need to be a minimum of an acre, ideally about 2 acres. The area would be fenced; 4 ft fencing should be adequate because this is what is used at Bridgwater.

Cllr Bennett has spoken to the Warren Trust regarding this issue, and, in principle, they are happy for us to investigate the proposal but they will want to see final plans with an assurance that the area is kept neat and is well policed.

The resident said she would be willing to fundraise for the cost of fencing etc. Volunteers could look after the area. The issue of grass cutting would need to be resolved.

2026/234 Playpark

234.1 Quarterly inspection

Councillors were asked to approve the renewal of the quarterly inspection contract for the Playpark by Elite Inspections at a cost of £105 plus VAT per inspection.

**Cllr Bennett proposed that the Parish Council renew the contract at the new price.
Cllr Easterbrook seconded the proposal.
Councillors unanimously approved the proposal.**

234.2 Quotation to repaint small multi-play and swings

A quotation has been received from Somerset Landscapes to repaint the small multi-play and swings. Other contractors have been contacted but, other than Somerset Landscapes, no quotations have been received by return.

**Cllr Easterbrook proposed the Parish Council accept the quote from Somerset Landscapes
Cllr Ripley seconded the proposal
Councillors unanimously approved the proposal.**

2026/235 Planning

There were no new planning applications.

2026/236 Correspondence

Cllr Bennett read a letter from a resident regarding the use of the Recreation Field car park. The resident conducted a survey which he feels shows that the car park is not used

excessively and does not require alterations or enlargement. Councillors felt that the number of cars using the car park can change very quickly and during busy times it is very well used.

The letter went on to say that in the opinion of the resident it is mainly used by Ilminster Football Youth and that Ilton is subsidising Ilminster Youth by paying for car park maintenance.

Cllr Bennett noted that Ilminster Youth pay a yearly fee to use the Football Pitch which generally covers maintenance of the Pitch. The car park is used by many Ilton residents including those in Copse Lane.

2026/237 Council Administration

237.1 Date of next full Council meeting

It is not known yet whether there will be an election on Tuesday 28th April. The date of the next full Council meeting will be advised.

Contact Cllr Bennett for items to be included on the agenda.

237.2 Date of the Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 12th May 2026 commencing at 7.00 p.m.

237.3 Internal Audit

The date for the internal audit is Monday 13th April 2026.

Public meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

2026/238 Staffing Committee - Appointment of Clerk

Cllr Gordon is the Chair of the Staffing Committee. The Committee interviewed 7 candidates. The Committee recommend to the Parish Council the appointment of Mr Michael Norton as Clerk. He is not a trained clerk but is very experienced with good organisational skills and has clerked for barristers.

Cllr Easterbrook proposed the appointment of Mr Norton
Cllr Sherwood seconded the proposal.
Cllrs voted unanimously to offer the appointment to Mr Norton.

Accordingly, Mr Norton was invited back into the room and Cllr Bennett offered him the position of Clerk.

Mr Norton accepted the appointment. A contract will be drawn up.

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

Approved by:

Date: